

*Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33.2 (1998): 29–66  
(This .pdf version reproduces pagination of printed form)

**RECONNECTING THE MEANS TO THE END:  
A WESLEYAN PRESCRIPTION FOR THE HOLINESS MOVEMENT**

Randy L. Maddox

For: Morris Weigelt<sup>1</sup>

In 1994 Keith Drury had the courage to say publicly what many other insiders have sensed for some time—that the (North American) holiness movement is dead!<sup>2</sup> He immediately added that the problem was not declining membership. The traditional holiness denominations have done better than most others on this count. But Drury noted that this supposed success is one aspect of the demise of these groups as a focused movement. The movement originally gathered around a distinctive emphasis on holiness of heart and life as the goal for all Christians. The member denominations now focus more on church growth and on being assimilated into “respectable” generic American evangelicalism. The clear result is that the characteristic holiness proclamation of entire sanctification has been broadly abandoned. Indeed, Drury suggests that *any* expectation of regenerating transformation in the Christian life (i.e., even initial sanctification) is becoming increasingly rare.

---

<sup>1</sup>This essay is dedicated to Dr. Morris Weigelt, under whom I began my studies as a religion major twenty-five years ago, and who has been a leader in recent efforts to recover disciplines of spiritual formation in holiness churches.

<sup>2</sup>Keith Drury, “The Holiness Movement is Dead,” *Holiness Digest* 8.1 (Winter 1994): 13–15.

If the notion of true holiness of heart and life, or Christian Perfection, were only an idiosyncratic creation of the American holiness movement then the transition that Drury is describing might be viewed with mere historical interest, or even be evaluated positively as a return to the mainstream of Christianity. But if the pursuit of such holiness is considered instead a central ideal of the catholic Christian faith, then this transition becomes another accommodation to mediocrity in Christian life. As one who shares the second evaluation, I sympathize deeply with Drury's concern to find a way to reverse this demise.

But how can such a reversal be best effected? Drury connects the decline in emphasis on holiness to a period of overreaction against earlier theological and practical abuses within the movement, which he blames for deflecting holiness denominations from convincing the generations of preachers and laity now in their forties, thirties and twenties of the positive importance of entire sanctification. Accordingly, his main remedy appears to be a renewed emphasis on preaching boldly (and enforcing disciplinarily!) the ideal of *instantaneous* conversion and *instantaneous* entire sanctification.<sup>3</sup> I do not consider this prescription very likely to be effective; my goal in this paper is to explain why, and to suggest an alternative.

## **I. FOCUSING THE DIAGNOSIS OF THE PRESENT MALADY**

Effective treatment of a malady is dependent upon accurate diagnosis of its underlying causes. As one within the generations in question, who was raised in a holiness church and trained for ministry in holiness schools, I can confirm Drury's judgment that most of my peers shared with me a dissatisfaction with the models of the sanctified life that dominated our upbringing. But our dissatisfaction was not totally reactionary. For many of us it was precisely because we *had* imbibed a conviction of the importance of holiness of heart and life that we were so frustrated: we sympathized with the goal to which we were repeatedly called, but found the means typically offered for achieving it to be ineffective. In particular, we sought instantaneous entire sanctification through innumerable trips to the altar, and then puzzled over why the impact of these "experiences" so consistently drained away. The reluctant conclusion most often reached was that the goal was unrealistic, that we were constitutionally incapable

---

<sup>3</sup>See *ibid*, 15.

of experiencing it. *That* is why so many in our generations have let the topic of Christian Perfection fade from view (and why some are extending similar conclusions to the possibility of any spiritual regeneration).

In other words, I question Drury's diagnosis that the increasing neglect of—indeed, embarrassment about—Christian Perfection in holiness circles should be attributed mainly to a deficiency over the last forty years in proclaiming the importance of instantaneous entire sanctification. I would suggest that the deeper cause is instead the very tendency of the movement to focus the notion of holiness so heavily upon the achievements of such an *instant* when one responds to the proclamation. This focus has led to a relative neglect of the equally essential dimension of spiritual growth in achieving full holiness of heart and life, and of the various means of grace that nurture this growth.

This suggestion is hardly new. It was advanced over forty years ago by John Peters in one of the first insider critiques of the understanding of Christian Perfection in the holiness movement.<sup>4</sup> Peters framed his critique by comparing the understanding of Christian Perfection and its nurture that were current in holiness circles with the teachings of John Wesley. His initial efforts, combined with a concurrent republication of Wesley's *Works* that made these writings more available to holiness scholars,<sup>5</sup> sparked a growing realization of the differences between Wesley's model of the sanctified life and that prominent in holiness circles. The outcome has been mounting calls for recovering Wesley's richer network of means for nurturing Christian holiness.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>See John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Pierce & Washabaugh, 1956; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 184–86. Peters was raised and trained in the Church of the Nazarene.

<sup>5</sup>Wes Tracy notes that it was common for those in holiness schools from the 1940s into the 1960s to complete their training without being expected to read a single page of Wesley ("Foreword," *A Layman's Guide to Sanctification*, by H. Ray Dunning [Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1991], 10–11). This began to turn around when the *Works of Wesley* were reissued by Zondervan (a publisher catering to holiness circles) in 1958.

<sup>6</sup>A couple of the clearest recent examples are Paul Merritt Bassett, "Wesleyan Words in the Nineteenth-Century World: 'Sin,' A Case Study," *Evangelical Journal* 8 (1990): 15–40; esp. 30–32; and Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1992).

As my title suggests, I share the conviction that Wesley's heirs in contemporary holiness churches would benefit from recovering his full model of Christian nurture. But how hopeful is such a recovery? And what means are most likely to foster it? Answers to these questions require a further level of diagnosis. In particular, it is important to discern what led the holiness movement to revise Wesley's model so drastically in the first place.

In their recent comparative work scholars have identified such contributing factors to the holiness revisions as 1) the revivalist context of American religion with its emphasis on immediacy and crisis, 2) the exegetical equation (from John Fletcher) of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with entire sanctification, and 3) the tendency of holiness preaching to portray inbred sin as a material-like substance.<sup>7</sup> While each of these is significant, as I have puzzled over the developments I have become convinced that another factor is interwoven among them, perhaps as a thread that links them together. My interest in this possible interconnecting factor grew as I sensed how it also helps explain the simultaneous demise of Wesley's model of Christian nurture among those American Methodists who rejected the emerging holiness movement.<sup>8</sup>

This factor, which I am proposing needs greater attention in current attempts to revitalize the holiness movement, involves the centrality of assumptions (whether explicit or tacit) about "moral psychology" to both theoretical models of the nature of spiritual life and practical models for nurturing that life. Wesley's model of holiness of heart and life was consciously framed within a very specific moral psychology. I have shown previously that Wesley's immediate heirs decisively (though without realizing it!) rejected his moral psychology, opting for an alternative psychology within which his distinctive emphases regarding Christian Perfection made little sense. The result was pressure either to abandon the notion of Christian Perfection or to reformulate it in terms that fit the alternative moral psychology. The ensuing ferment led to the split in North America between Wesley's mainline-Methodist and his holiness descendants.<sup>9</sup> My

---

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Melvin Dieter, "The Wesleyan Perspective," in *Five Views on Sanctification*, by M.E. Dieter, et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 11–46.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Randy L. Maddox, "Social Grace: The Eclipse of the Church as a Means of Grace in American Methodism," in *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu*, edited by Tim Macquiban (Oxford: Applied Theology Press, 1994), 131–60.

<sup>9</sup>Randy L. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism," *Asbury Theological Journal* 51.1 (1996): 151–72.

earlier analysis focused on this split. I want to extend it now to consider later developments in the holiness wing of the split. My hope is that consideration of the dimension of moral psychology will help to enlighten why this wing has reached the present malaise, and what the most promising agenda is for recovering Wesley's overall model of holiness of heart and life.

## II. THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES IN MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

"Moral psychology," as I am using the term, refers to one's fundamental assumptions about the dynamics that account for human moral choice and action. It involves the range of possible responses to the questions: Are our options truly open in any sense at the juncture of a moral choice or act? If so, what hinders us from choosing as we ought? And, what would most effectively "free" us to choose differently? An awareness of the major alternatives on these issues will provide an instructive backdrop for our focal topic (relate the following discussion to the chart in Appendix A).<sup>10</sup>

One span of options organizing these alternatives focuses on the identification and relative valuation of the motivating dynamics behind moral choice and action. From the earliest roots of Western culture this span has been cast in terms of a contrast between the rational and the passional dimensions of our nature. This casting creates three major alternative valuations: either one stresses the volitional primacy of the rational dimension; or this primacy is assigned to the passional dimension; or one insists that authentic volition is more holistic, integrating both dimensions to some degree.

---

<sup>10</sup>Moral psychology was a common academic topic into the nineteenth century. But then considerations of ethics and psychology rapidly separated, often being defined in contrast with one another (as normative versus descriptive). This separation has recently been challenged, sparking renewed serious philosophical and historical considerations of the topic. For a beginning orientation to the issues, see such books as Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Albrecht Diehle, *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982); Julia Annas, *Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); and Justin Oakley, *Morality and the Emotions* (New York: Routledge, 1992). The following analysis is informed by these and many other studies. The typology that I suggest is my own, since no standard typology (or terminology!) has yet been achieved.

The intersecting set of options that multiplies the range of alternatives in moral psychology focuses on the nature of the relationship between motivating dynamics and actual moral volition. At one extreme of this set is the recurrent “determinist” assumption that motivating dynamics stringently and exhaustively account for human choice and action, a view that ultimately reduces the will to its motivating dynamics. The starkest possible contrast to this would be an “indeterminist” insistence on the pure autonomy of human willing, denying any significant influence or constraint of motivating dynamics upon our moral choices. While determinists like to argue that this is the only alternative, and rightly dismiss it as incoherent, it has had few serious exponents. The majority of those reflecting on these issues, being uncomfortable with determinism, have turned instead to a “self-determinist” conception of the will. This mediating strategy acknowledges the significant influence of motivating dynamics on human choice and action, but defends some degree of autonomy for a person’s will as the final arbitrator of moral volition—allowing us to veto at times even the strongest motives.

When the two sets of options are overlaid, three classic—albeit extreme—alternatives in moral psychology emerge in the deterministic camp. A pure **intellectualist** (like some see in Socrates) assumes that moral action is initiated solely, and necessarily, by one’s rational conviction of the goodness of an action (wrong actions being attributed to false conviction). In essence, intellectual conviction *is* the will, with any felt motives being functions of that conviction. In stark contrast, a strong **naturalist** (like Hume at his most rhetorical moments) insists that what we sense as our will is simply the routine expression of our naturalistic passions (a term casting our appetites, drives, emotional reactions, and so on as ways we *suffer* the impact of our givenness). In this case, any intellectual deliberation involved in moral choice is reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of these irrational determining causes. **Voluntarists** (like Hobbes) join naturalists in denying that intellectual conviction alone is sufficient to move humans to action, but they are unhappy with the reduction of intellect to a function of irrational passions. They prefer to talk about the will as the holistic orientation of the person, incorporating a role for the deterministic impact of rational persuasion within the larger propensities that dictate our choices and actions.

On the self-determinist side of the typology the focal consideration is less about which motivating dynamics *do* influence our moral choices

and actions than about which dynamics *ought* to control these. The broad distinguishing question is whether humans are assumed to have greater autonomy (and hence moral integrity) in volition when they: 1) bring the irrational passions under rational control, 2) reject false rational constraints upon the expression of the passions, or 3) recognize and nurture more holistic inclinations to action? Within each of the major alternatives framed by this question can be discerned a spectrum of more subtle differing emphases about what maximizes “freedom” for moral choice and action.<sup>11</sup> On the side of the spectrum nearer determinism are those who view our inclination to give primacy to the preferred freeing motivational dynamic as natural, arising almost spontaneously. The only problem, they warn, is that this inclination can be thwarted (unlike in full determinism), to the detriment of our moral sensitivity and ability. On the side approaching theoretical indeterminism are those who have imbibed the Enlightenment’s tendency to equate freedom with casting off all prior influences. They embrace a decisionistic ideal in which all existing inclinations are viewed ultimately as obstacles to be transcended in the praiseworthy effort to achieve (fleeting!) moral autonomy. In the tension between these alternatives stand those who believe that both sides view motivating dynamics in too static of terms. They insist that inclinations are malleable in nature, capable of being strengthened (or weakened!) and redirected by purposeful interaction. Their point is that careful habituation of the proper inclinations will—somewhat ironically—*increase* one’s freedom from constraints in moral choice and action.

Thus it is that we have the debates among self-determinists between those who think that moral integrity and freedom is ultimately grounded in removing any thwarts to our **spontaneous rational control** of the

---

<sup>11</sup>When determinists speak about our moral choices as in any way free, they define this freedom in a “compatibilist” fashion. That is, they try to account for our sense of freedom in a manner compatible with the claim that no other outcome was possible in a given case than the one that actually occurred. For example, intellectualists argue that a decision is free because it is rational (rather than irrationally coerced), even though we cannot resist rational conviction. Similarly, voluntarists and naturalists equate human freedom with having actions determined by internal rather than external factors. By contrast, these self-determinist debates over maximizing freedom assume a definition that is “incompatibilist,” we are free only to the extent there is some real possibility (however small) of alternative choice or action.

passions (Socrates as others read him), those who emphasize more the need to develop **habituated rational control** of the passions (like Plato), and those urging us not to rely on any inclinations but to assert **decisionistic rational control** over the habitual and passional dimensions of life (Kant); all in stark contrast with those who place their hope instead in casting off the numerous cultural and intellectual fetters upon **spontaneous expression** of our natural—therefore, good—passions (Rousseau), those who strive to develop **habituated expression** of motivating passions so as to enjoy their benefit (prudent hedonism), and those who simply call us to bold **decisionistic expression** of our liberating passions (such as Nietzsche’s “will to power”); while standing between these two polar camps are those who locate moral freedom more in owning our holistic **spontaneous sentiments** (like Hutcheson’s moral sentiments), or in nurturing holistic **habituated virtues** (Aristotle), or finally in simple **decisionistic self-assertion** (alá Sartre).

Such are the classic philosophical expressions of alternative moral psychologies. In order to relate Wesley to this spectrum, we need next to consider briefly how Christians have historically appropriated these alternatives (cf. Appendix B). The initial generation of Christians were too involved in the struggle for survival to engage in extended interaction with the philosophical streams of their Greco-Roman context. Even so, one can discern in most of their writings an uncomfortableness with the fatalism of surrounding religious and philosophical currents. This became more evident as explicit dialogue with alternative moral psychologies began. While there were Gnostic flirtations with intellectualism in Christian circles, more common was Clement of Alexandria’s strong endorsement of self-determinism, in the particular form of Plato’s emphasis on habituated rational control of the passions.<sup>12</sup>

This appropriation of Plato’s moral psychology found broad continuing representation in the church, but it also encountered an influential challenger in the Western church in the person of St. Augustine. Augustine had struggled and failed in his own spiritual pilgrimage to gain habituated rational control over his passions. He drew two conclusions from this failure: 1) that such attempts trust in ineffective human efforts rather than in divine gracious intervention; and 2) that reason is more the slave

---

<sup>12</sup>Cf. David C. Aune, “Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity,” in *Hellenization Revisited*, edited by Wendy Helleman (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 125–58.



than the master of the passions. The alternative moral psychology that Augustine developed remains one of the clearest examples of (deterministic) voluntarism in Christian thought.<sup>13</sup> He argued that all human moral choices flow from preexisting holistic affections like love or hate. As a result of the fall, we are born with bent affections that can give rise only to sinful actions. Nothing we attempt in our own power can successfully suppress or remove these bent affections. However, in regeneration God graciously implants (in the elect) new affections that then *naturally* manifest themselves in holy living—within the constraints of our present conflicted situation.

Augustine's controversial proposal served to highlight that Christian appropriations of moral psychology must relate this topic to our central convictions about human depravity and the necessity of God's redemptive grace. For Augustine, any defense of self-determination stood in direct conflict with the affirmation that salvation is by grace. Most of his successors have been dissatisfied with this dichotomous assumption. For example, those who retained the Platonic moral psychology came to emphasize as strongly as Augustine that even the earliest ability we have to exert rational self-determination over the troublesome irrational passions (whose disorder they attribute to the Fall) is a gift of grace—whether a remaining glimmer of the grace of creation or the most nascent universal expression of God's redemptive gracious work. Unlike Augustine, however, they portrayed grace as *empowering* the self-determining role of our will, rather than *overpowering* it.<sup>14</sup>

While such nuanced approaches to the interrelationship of grace and human effort offered an alternative to Augustine's first conclusion, they did not necessarily address the second: his rejection of the sufficiency of rational conviction to effect moral action. Many Medieval scholastics simply dismissed this critique, affirming reason as the gracious provision for inclining us spontaneously to moral action—unless we allow our passions to thwart it. Others like Duns Scotus, who found this alternative arid and

---

<sup>13</sup>A particularly helpful analysis of Augustine's moral psychology is James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>14</sup>For a good (Eastern church) case in point, see John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, Bk. II, chap. 12 (translated by Frederic Chase as volume 27 of *The Fathers of the Church* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1958], 235–36).

incipiently determinist, used Augustine's insistence on the subservience of reason to the holistic will to defend (ironically) a form of decisionistic self-assertion. The more balanced and influential alternative to both voluntarism and intellectualism in the Medieval church awaited the rehabilitation of Aristotle, particularly Aquinas' mature embrace of his model of habituated virtues.<sup>15</sup> Aquinas came to value the way that Aristotle's model implied an ever deepening co-operation of God and humanity in the spiritual life, and the way that it made sense of how living in spiritual disciplines provides persons with a progressive freedom for Christlike action.

Characteristically, the points valued by Aquinas were more commonly feared by Protestants as verging upon works-righteousness. Some like Luther and Calvin found themselves pushed back towards Augustine's voluntarism in the effort to emphasize the priority of God's grace in salvation. Other Protestants balked at the apparent loss of human integrity involved in this move. The majority preferred to stress that God's unmerited grace restores to believers some propensity to self-determination, provided that we do not thwart this gracious work. Protestant scholastics typically focused this gracious transformation in the enlightenment of our mind, which enables us to restore rational primacy over the troublesome passions; Pietists rebutted that true liberty is grounded in the holistic sentiments awakened when our hearts experience the empowering love of God (a model given later influential expression by Schleiermacher). Those most adamant about self-determination proved ready recruits for the decisionistic emphases of emerging Enlightenment thought. Only the most fringe groups (some libertines) flirted with a moral psychology that gave independent primacy to the passions.

### III. WESLEY'S "AFFECTIONAL" MODEL OF HOLINESS OF HEART AND LIFE

By virtue of its fluctuating political dynamics, representatives of the full range of Christian appropriations of moral psychology could be found in Wesley's Anglican context. However, the most influential voices at the

---

<sup>15</sup>The issue of Aquinas's moral psychology, and his apparent move from initial emphasis on spontaneous rational control to a mature focus on habituated virtues, is a matter of ongoing scholarly debate. To enter the debate compare James Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's "Summa Theologiae"* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1992) to Jeffrey Peter Hause, "Thomas Aquinas on the Will and Moral Responsibility" (Cornell University Ph.D. thesis, 1995).

beginning of his century championed the Platonic model of habituated rational control of the passions.<sup>16</sup> This helps account for overtones of this model in Wesley's early prescriptions for the spiritual life.<sup>17</sup> It also casts in bold relief the changing emphases that soon began to shape his mature model of Christian spirituality.

These changes were sparked by Wesley's personal confrontation with the limitations of the Platonic model highlighted by the Augustinian tradition. His deeper encounter with this tradition (via the English Moravians) at the climax of a period of spiritual struggle sensitized Wesley to the subtle tendency of a preoccupation with human habit formation to eclipse the conviction of God's gracious prevenience in salvation. The encounter also reenforced his growing doubts about the ability of rational conviction alone to effect human volition. But Wesley could not accept Augustine's deterministic alternative of voluntarism. And he quickly became suspicious of the quietist tendencies in the Moravians' pietistic emphasis on spontaneous sentiments. So where was he to turn?

Wesley's way forward turned out to be paved by his embrace of the empiricist turn in eighteenth-century British philosophy. For empiricism truth is experienced receptively by the human intellect, not preexistent within it, nor imposed by it upon our experience. In moral psychology this philosophical conviction led to the parallel insistence that humans are moved to action only as we are experientially affected. To use a practical example, they held that rational persuasion of the rightness of loving others cannot of itself move us to do so; we are ultimately enabled to love others only as we experience love ourselves. The reason for this, they argued, is that "will" is not a mere cipher for intellectual conviction, nor

---

<sup>16</sup>Two helpful studies that place Wesley in this context are Robin W. Lovin, "The Physics of True Virtue," in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore H. Runyon (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1985), 264–72; and Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660–1780* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>17</sup>Perhaps the clearest example is in Sermon 142 (1731), "The Wisdom of Winning Souls," §II, *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984ff), 4: 313: "...when due care has been used to strengthen his understanding, then 'tis time to use the other great means of winning souls, namely, the regulating of his affections. Indeed without doing this the other can't be done thoroughly—he that would well enlighten the head must cleanse the heart. Otherwise the disorder of the will again disorders the understanding."

is it a repository of volitional spontaneity, it is a set of responsive holistic “affections” that must be engaged in order to incite us to action.

Wesley self-consciously appropriated this empiricist-inspired *affectional* moral psychology.<sup>18</sup> It is reflected in his typical list of the faculties that constitute the Image of God in humanity: understanding, will, liberty and conscience. “Will” is used in this list as an inclusive term for the various affections. These affections are not simply feelings, they are the indispensable motivating inclinations behind human action. In their ideal expression they integrate the rational and emotional dimensions of human life into holistic inclinations toward action (like love). While provocative of human action, the affections have a crucial receptive dimension as well. They are not self-causative, but are awakened and thrive *in response* to experience of external reality. In what Wesley held as the crucial instance, it is only in response to our experience of God’s gracious love for us, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that our affection of love for God and others is awakened and grows.<sup>19</sup>

This grounding of moral volition in responsive holistic affections shares obvious similarities with Augustine. It also calls to mind empiricists like Hume who presented the influence of our passions upon our actions as invincible, thereby undermining human freedom. Wesley’s way of avoiding this implication was to include among our human capacities “liberty,” which he carefully distinguished from “will.” While the affections (i.e., the will) responsively provide our various actual inclinations to action, liberty is our limited autonomous capacity to *refuse* to enact any particular inclination. Though we cannot self-generate love, we do have the liberty to stifle responsive loving! This insistence distanced Wesley’s mature moral psychology from voluntarism.

---

<sup>18</sup>This point is amply demonstrated in Richard B. Steele, “*Gracious Affections*” and “*True Virtue*” according to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994); and Gregory S. Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989). For further discussion and documentation of the following summary of Wesley, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994).

<sup>19</sup>This point permeates Wesley’s works. For a few examples, see *Character of a Methodist*, §13, *Works* 9:39; *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, §61, *Works* 11:70; *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Pt. I, §1.3, *Works* 11:106; Sermon 10, “The Witness of the Spirit I,” §1.8, *Works* 1:274; and Sermon 120, “The Unity of the Divine Being,” §17, *Works* 4:67.

To appreciate how his developed views also differed from the model of spontaneous sentiments (with its quietist tendencies), we need to bring into our discussion Wesley's interest in moral "tempers."<sup>20</sup> He drew upon a common eighteenth-century sense of this word to affirm that our affections need not be simply transitory, they can be focused and strengthened into enduring dispositions. The capacity for simple responsive love is an affection; an enduring disposition to love is a (holy) temper. The crucial point for our discussion is that, for Wesley, God does not typically infuse holy tempers instantaneously. Rather, God's regenerating grace awakens in believers the "seeds" of such virtues. These seeds then strengthen and take shape as we "grow in grace."<sup>21</sup> Given liberty, this growth involves our responsible cooperation, for we could instead neglect or stifle God's gracious empowerment.

By now it should be clear that Wesley's mature moral psychology comes closest to the habituated virtue model of Aquinas. This made it necessary for him to address repeatedly the fear that emphasis on forming virtues was a type of works righteousness. His basic rebuttal was to reiterate the responsive nature of the affections, which requires a spiraling interaction of God's *gracious* prevenience and our *responsible* cooperation throughout the Christian journey.<sup>22</sup> The potential strength of this response was the alternative it offered to the unfortunate tendency in Western Christian debates of posing God's agency and human agency as mutually exclusive in the process of salvation—whether by identifying God's agency with instantaneous changes while human agency accounts for gradual changes, linking God with initial changes while attributing to humans any later changes, or whatever.<sup>23</sup>

With his mature moral psychology clarified, we need to consider next how integral it was to Wesley's endorsement of Christian perfection

---

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 69–70; and Kenneth J. Collins, "John Wesley's Topography of the Heart: Dispositions, Tempers and Affections," *Methodist History* (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup>Cf. *Minutes* (2 Aug. 1745), Q. 1, in *John Wesley*, ed. Albert Outler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 152. See Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 178–79 for a discussion of two passages where Wesley argues that holy tempers can be implanted in a fully mature state.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. his classic Sermon 85, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," *Works* 3:199–209.

<sup>23</sup>For some comments on Wesley's own incomplete recognition of this alternative, see Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 153–54.

and his emphasis on the means of grace in the pursuit of this goal. This is signaled by the centrality of the tempers to his understanding of both sin and holiness. In the case of sin, he insisted that the issue was more than individual wrong actions. He frequently discussed sin in terms of a threefold division: sinful nature or tempers, sinful words and sinful actions. The point of this division was that sinful actions and words *flow from* corrupted tempers, so the problem of sin must ultimately be addressed at this affectional level. Correspondingly, Wesley's typical definition of Christian life placed primary emphasis on this inward dimension, "the renewal of our heart after the image of [God who] created us."<sup>24</sup> This renewal involves both the enlivening of our affections in response to the affect of God's graciously communicated loving Presence and the tempering of these affections into holy dispositions. Since holiness of thought, word, and action would flow from such renewal, Wesley could identify the essential goal of all true religion as the recovery of holy tempers.<sup>25</sup>

This makes the means of grace central to true religion as well, since Wesley frequently warned his followers of the folly of seeking the end of holy tempers apart from the means that God has graciously provided.<sup>26</sup> Reflecting his conviction of God's *responsible grace*, Wesley valued the means of grace both as avenues through which God conveys the gracious Presence that enables our responsive growth in holiness and as exercises by which we responsibly nurture that holiness.<sup>27</sup> Reflecting his holistic psychology, his recommendations to his followers interwove both means that present rational enlightenment or challenge and means designed to nurture our affective openness and responsiveness to God's loving Presence. Reflecting his appreciation for the variety of ways in which God's love is mediated, including particularly its mediation through other persons, Wesley made communal means of grace central to his movement, rejecting the solitary search for holiness.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>*Journal* (13 Sept. 1739), *Works* 19:97.

<sup>25</sup>Sermon 91, "On Charity," §III.12, *Works* 3:306.

<sup>26</sup>For three of the best known examples, see Letter to Count Zinzendorf and the Church at Herrnhut (5–8 Aug. 1740), *Works* 26:27; Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," *Works* 1:378–97; and Letter to William Law (6 Jan. 1756), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931) 3:366.

<sup>27</sup>This thesis is ably defended in Knight, *Presence of God*.

<sup>28</sup>See Sermon 24, "Sermon on the Mount IV," §I.1, *Works* 1:533–34; and *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1939), Preface, §§4–5, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 14:321.

How close did Wesley hope we could come, through responsive participation in such means of grace, to the end of recovered holy tempers in this life? He is well-known for the claim that *entire* sanctification is a present possibility for Christians. The place to begin unpacking this claim is to stress that entire sanctification (or Christian Perfection) is not an isolated reality for Wesley but a dynamic level of maturity within the larger process of sanctification, the level characteristic of *adult* Christian life. Since he considered love to be the essence of Christian life he could define Christian Perfection as “the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbor, ruling our tempers, words, and actions.”<sup>29</sup> Notice that love is not only said to be present, it is *ruling*. God’s love is shed abroad in the lives of all Christians, awakening their responsive love for God and others. But this love is often weak, sporadic, and contested by contrary affections in new believers. In the lives of the entirely sanctified Wesley maintained that it is strengthened and patterned “to the point that there is no mixture of any contrary affections—all is peace and harmony.”<sup>30</sup>

Affections contrary to love would be “inward sin.” Wesley believed that this inward sin was overcome in entire sanctification. In a few instances he described this overcoming as a “rooting out” or “destruction” of inward sin. As he came to realize, this language is problematic, because talk of the destruction of sinful affections can connote the impossibility of their return. By contrast, Wesley became convinced of the sad reality that sinful affections (and resulting outward sins) may reemerge in lives that had been ruled by love. How could one express the benefits of Christian Perfection without obscuring this fact? When Wesley was pressed directly on this point he offered the alternative account that in the soul of an entirely sanctified person holy tempers are *presently* reigning to the point of “driving out” opposing tempers (although these may return).<sup>31</sup>

At this juncture it is important to remember that Wesley’s focus on affections in describing Christian Perfection was not intended as an alternative to actions. He assumed that acts of love would flow from a temper of love. Yet, he also recognized that ignorance, mistakes, and other human

---

<sup>29</sup>“Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection,” *Works* (Jackson) 11:446.

<sup>30</sup>Sermon 83, “On Patience,” §10, *Works* 3:176.

<sup>31</sup>Letter to Joseph Benson (5 Oct. 1770), *Letters* (Telford) 5:203–4. Note also the definition of Christian Perfection as “love filling the heart, expelling pride, anger, desire, self-will...,” in *Farther Thoughts Upon Christian Perfection*, Q. 12, *Works* (Jackson) 11:418.

frailties often distort the passage from affection to action. It was in this sense that he tired of the debate over whether Christian Perfection was “sinless.” He did indeed believe that it consisted in holy tempers, but not that it was characterized by infallible expression of those tempers in actions.

Perhaps the best way to capture Wesley’s affectional view of entire sanctification, then, is to say that he was convinced that the Christian life did not have to remain a life of perpetual struggle. He believed that our sin-distorted human lives can be responsibly transformed through God’s loving grace to the point where we are truly freed to love God and others consistently. Christians can aspire to take on the disposition of Christ, and to live out that disposition within the constraints of our human infirmities.<sup>32</sup> To deny this possibility would be to deny the sufficiency of God’s empowering grace—to make the power of sin greater than that of grace.

#### **IV. 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY METHODIST MODELS OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION**

The more one appreciates how integrally Wesley’s conception of holiness of heart and life was framed by his moral psychology, the easier it is to understand how difficult it might be to maintain this conception if you rejected his moral psychology. As mentioned earlier, this is exactly the situation in which Wesley’s theological descendants rapidly placed themselves, particularly in the North American context. I need to rehearse enough of this story to set the stage for looking at later developments in the (Wesleyan) holiness movement.<sup>33</sup>

The dismissal of Wesley’s affectional moral psychology by his immediate heirs was not an isolated phenomenon. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed some extreme forms of empiricism, particularly David Hume’s epistemological skepticism and psychological naturalism. The deterministic implications of Hume’s equation of the will with the passions called forth strong reactions, most notably that of Thomas Reid. Reid rejected the identification of the will with the affections (of which he viewed the passions a subset), insisting that it was

---

<sup>32</sup>Note the description of Christian Perfection in terms of taking on the disposition of Christ in Sermon 76, “On Perfection,” §I.5, *Works* 3:74.

<sup>33</sup>Further details and documentation for this section of the paper are in Maddox, “Holiness of Heart and Life,” 156ff. Note, however, that continuing reflection has led me to distinguish in this paper variations of what I class together there as “intellectualist” moral psychologies.



instead our rational autonomy over all stimuli toward action. He allowed to Hume that the affections are arational, if not irrational, but argued that this rendered them strictly *amoral*. Likewise, Reid's maxim that only intentional acts have moral status led him to depict habituated tendencies (tempers) as also *amoral*, if not indeed subversive of truly moral choice, since they operate with minimal conscious intentionality. With this combination, Reid was sketching out the decisionistic rational control moral psychology that quickly came to dominate modern thought!

The rapidity with which Methodists appropriated this moral psychology owed in large part to the prominence that debates with the Calvinists took in shaping Methodist self-identity during this period. Central to these debates were the writings of Jonathan Edwards. In his *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* (1746) and later works Edwards developed an affectional moral psychology remarkably like that of Wesley. The crucial difference was that Edwards did not share Wesley's conviction of *responsible grace*. He allowed humans no "liberty" to refuse enacting their dominant affections. Rather, echoing Augustine's voluntarism, he argued that fallen humanity are free only to sin, and that the holy tempers that account for the virtuous acts of believers are infused unilaterally by God in their mature state. Edwards' arguments were so influential that an affectional moral psychology was soon equated with voluntarism, even among Methodists. As a result, when they took up decisionistic rational control emphases to rebut Edwards, nineteenth-century Methodists generally did not recognize that they were moving counter to the course that Wesley had chosen.

The transition toward a rationalist and decisionistic moral psychology can actually be noticed already in Wesley's favored coworker John Fletcher, and traced through the influential second generation British theologians Adam Clarke and Richard Watson. In part because of its fit with revolutionary and revivalist convictions, this revised moral psychology quickly assumed dominance among American Methodists. It held nearly official status through most of the nineteenth century in the moral philosophy texts placed on the required course of study for preachers, and it permeated the influential theological works of the period. As a result, most Methodists came to view the "will" as our autonomous ability to assert rational control over our various motivating dynamics, thereby freeing ourselves to make moral choices. Emotional or affectional motivating dynamics were assumed to be blind (arational), hence technically amoral

in character. Likewise, habits and inclinations were broadly judged to have moral status only when voluntarily embraced, and often considered more an obstacle to (than a facilitator of) truly moral action.

Adopting such differing emphases from Wesley's affectional moral psychology was bound to impact his correlated conviction that true holiness of heart and life is achievable through the nurture of a holistic set of means of grace. Indeed, it set off a debate among American Methodists in which all sides found it necessary to revise Wesley's model.<sup>34</sup>

The greatest revisions were by those who stressed most the decisionistic aspect of the new moral psychology. Within decisionistic models a "virtuous" person is not one who has nurtured inclinations towards desired moral behavior but one who heroically rises above all inclinations in an autonomous moral act. Moreover, this validation applies only to that act, and must be won anew with each subsequent decision. On such terms, it is no wonder that prominent voices in Methodist circles increasingly characterized "perfect" holiness as simply an *ideal to be endlessly pursued*—being achieved, at best, sporadically and temporarily.<sup>35</sup>

Understandably, other Methodists judged this a betrayal of Wesley and sought a way to reaffirm the possibility of Christian Perfection within the dynamics of their revised moral psychology. Some joined Asa Mahan and Charles Finney in insisting that the expectation of a consistent series of autonomous virtuous decisions is not so unrealistic, given the provisions of the New Covenant.<sup>36</sup> As one Methodist writer put it, "The Christian may, and is required by God, to be perfect every day of his [or her] life in the sense of keeping the whole moral law as the fruit of his [or her] regeneration."<sup>37</sup> The specification of regeneration as the basis for this requirement is significant. It reflects a desire (shared by Wesley) to

---

<sup>34</sup>Myung Soo Park, "Concepts of Holiness in American Evangelicalism: 1835–1915" (Boston University Ph.D. thesis, 1992) gives a survey putting Methodist developments in a larger context.

<sup>35</sup>A couple classic representatives are Daniel Whedon, "Doctrines of Methodism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 19 (1862): 241–74; and Francis McConnell, *The Essentials of Methodism* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1916), 17–24.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. Park, "Concepts of Holiness," 74–76; and J.H. Fairchild, "The Doctrine of Sanctification at Oberlin," *Congregational Quarterly* 18 (1876): 237–59.

<sup>37</sup>Samuel Franklin, *A Critical View of Wesleyan Perfection* (Cincinnati, OH: Methodist Book Concern, 1866), 571. A similar claim can be found in Wilbur Tillett, *Personal Salvation: Studies in Christian Doctrine Pertaining to the Spiritual Life* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1924), 465.

uphold the expectation of Christian Perfection for all Christians. But it makes this point by consolidating God's gracious transforming work in one event, abandoning Wesley's emphasis on ongoing responsive transformation by God's grace. This was possible because these descendants had set aside Wesley's conception of the purpose of sanctification as the progressive transformation of unholy inclinations (tempers) into holy ones. While they recognized that believers continue to struggle with inclinations to sinful acts, they accepted Reid's judgment (as did Mahan and Finney) that these inclinations have little moral status. Indeed, such inclinations were considered a necessary expression of our probationary situation. The true locus of moral concern, therefore, is not their amelioration but simply the consistent exercise over them of the *decisionistic rational control* that was restored in our regeneration.<sup>38</sup>

This first defense of Christian Perfection struck many Methodists as overly moralistic. While they shared the conviction that mature Christians should evidence consistency in their moral lives, they did not believe that it was a realistic expectation of the newly regenerate. Rather, such consistency must be *developed* within the Christian life. This emphasis moved them closer to Wesley's model of habituated tempers, but differences reflecting the rationalist tone of their preferred moral psychology remained (a fact they often acknowledged by disparaging Wesley's model!). In particular, they tended to conceive Christian Perfection as the *habituated rational control* over our lower (affectional) nature that is developed by repeated practice. The *holism* of Wesley's tempers is missing here, as is the *empowering* dimension of the means of grace that correlates to his emphasis on the responsive nature of affections. This helps explain why they typically restricted interest in the means of grace to those aimed mainly at exhorting our intellect: sermon, bible study, and prayer.<sup>39</sup>

There is a third major possible way of conceiving (self-determinist) Christian Perfection within the rational primacy spectrum of moral

---

<sup>38</sup>The most influential articulation of this overall scheme was Merritt Caldwell, *The Philosophy of Christian Perfection* (Auburn, NY: Derby & Miller, 1853).

<sup>39</sup>Major examples of this approach include DeWitt Clinton Huntington, *What is it to be Holy?* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Pye, 1898 [first edition, 1869]); Jeremiah Boland, *The Problem of Methodism* (3rd ed., Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1888); and James Mudge, *Growth in Holiness Toward Perfection* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1895).

psychology—affirming that Christians are meant to enjoy an enduring *spontaneous* rational control over our passions and affections. Since most Christians do not enter such an enduring state upon regeneration, developing this option would require clarifying what obstructions are blocking its expression and how they can be removed. Like a river bursting its dam, rational control would be assumed to flow *immediately* and *naturally* thereafter.

Phoebe Palmer’s “altar theology,” with its proposed shorter way to Christian holiness, contained elements of this approach. In direct contrast with gradual habituation, she argued that Christians can realize rational sovereignty over their passions (thereby enabling holiness in their actions) by simply consecrating themselves wholly to God. She often described the resulting sovereignty in spontaneous terms, as flowing forth naturally. But her intense focus on the human dimension of consecration created a counteracting *decisionistic* emphasis on the need to “keep our all on the altar” by renewing our consecration moment-by-moment.<sup>40</sup>

Some sympathetic Methodists invoked John Fletcher’s notion of a post-regeneration “baptism of the Holy Spirit” to balance Palmer’s focus on the human act of consecration.<sup>41</sup> They presented this baptism as “sealing” the Christian’s decisive act of consecration to God. They hoped in this way to explain how a *single* act of consecration could induce enduring control over our lower affectional nature by underscoring God’s empowering role. But in the process they stirred up a vigorous debate over the need for and/or benefit of such a “second work of grace.” Representatives of the other approaches to Christian Perfection uniformly rejected the suggestion that the possibility of true holiness was contingent upon some special gracious gift additional to our regeneration. They charged that this created a spiritual elitism and lowered the expectation of holy living for “average” Christians. They also pushed for a specific explanation of what it was that rendered holiness impossible for the merely regenerate Christian, and how the baptism of the Holy Spirit resolved this situation.

The explanation that came to define the last major revision of Christian Perfection in nineteenth-century American Methodism focused on

---

<sup>40</sup>Palmer’s views are best expressed in *The Way of Holiness* (New York: W.C. Palmer, 1843), 19–38; *Faith and Its Effects* (New York: W.C. Palmer, 1845); and *Entire Devotion to God: A Present to My Christian Friend* (New York: Palmer & Hughes, 1853). See also Harold E. Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987).

<sup>41</sup>This reframing of Palmer appears in Nathan Bangs, *The Necessity, Nature, and Fruits of Sanctification* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1881 [1851 original]); and Randolph Sinks Foster, *Nature and Blessedness of Christian Purity* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1851).

Original Sin. While Wesley had preferred to call the unholy tempers remaining in believers “inward sin” or “inbeing sin,” he also occasionally used the traditional language of “Original Sin.”<sup>42</sup> In the push to demonstrate their Protestant orthodoxy, “Original Sin” rapidly became the standard term his heirs used to designate these distorted inclinations of believers’ affections. But this forced them into a confrontation with the Reidian assumption that inclinations of our affections are morally relevant only to the degree that they represent the cumulative impact of our individual deliberate choices (thereby specifically excluding any innate inclinations). A predictable result of this confrontation was the growing number of Methodists abandoning the notion of Original Sin. The more significant result, for present interests, is the manner in which some chose to defend the notion. They specifically differentiated Original Sin from any inclination of our affections; it became a deeper lying inborn “evil principle,” with distortions in our affections being among its secondary effects.<sup>43</sup>

The Methodists who pushed this distinction were those most concerned to champion a model of Christian Perfection as something achieved instantaneously, subsequent to regeneration, at the time one receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> They made their case by using this revised conception of Original Sin to account for the spiritual struggles of new believers. They argued that the true obstacle to holy living is not wrong inclinations, which might be defused or reshaped, but this deeper lying evil principle (which they described with such additional names as the “Old Man” and the “carnal mind”).<sup>45</sup> The clear implication was that neither heroic volitional resolve nor thorough habituation can bring true “freedom” for obedience. The only thing that will suffice is for this principle to be entirely removed from the believer’s life. And how is this possible? The core of the final revision was the claim that the baptism

---

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 74–75.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. John Allen Wood, *Perfect Love*, rev. ed. (South Pasadena, CA: for the author, 1894 [ori., 1861]), 65; and Wood, *Purity and Maturity* (New York: Palmer, 1876), 134.

<sup>44</sup>The pioneering consolidator of this approach was John A. Wood. Other prominent nineteenth-century representatives include J.H. Collins, Lewis Romaine Dunn, William B. Godby, Samuel Keen, Asbury Lowrey, William McDonald, Daniel Steele, and George Watson.

<sup>45</sup>Cf. George Asbury McLaughlin, *Inbred Sin* (Chicago, IL: McDonald & Gill, 1887); Beverly Carradine, *The Old Man* (Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing, 1899); and D.F. Brooks, *What is the Carnal Mind?* (Chicago, IL: Christian Witness, 1905).

of the Holy Spirit—and it *alone*—effects this removal.<sup>46</sup> New believers struggling with unholy inclinations should be encouraged to move on rapidly to receiving this additional gift of God, not frustrated with fruitless counsel about nurturing holy character. Those who receive this baptism will find that, with the obstacle of the evil principle eradicated and the Spirit's empowering presence dwelling fully within, *spontaneous rational control* over their affections will flow freely.<sup>47</sup>

## V. TENSIONS IN THE HOLINESS MODEL OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

This final reformulation of Christian Perfection became the classic model of the (Wesleyan) holiness movement. Its leading proponents joined to create a national association for promoting the message of holiness in the late 1860s. This association served from the beginning as the major point of connection and identity for “holiness folk,” both the shrinking numbers within long-standing Methodist groups and the growing numbers moving into emerging holiness denominations. It enshrined the central emphases of the third reformulation in the definition of entire sanctification adopted in the Declaration of Principles in 1885:

Entire Sanctification ... is that great work wrought subsequent to regeneration, by the Holy Ghost, upon the sole condition of faith ... such faith being preceded by an act of solemn and complete consecration. this work has these distinct elements: (1) the entire extinction of the carnal mind, the total eradication of the birth principle of sin. (2) the communication of perfect love to the soul .... (3) the abiding indwelling of the Holy Ghost .... There is such a close connection between the gifts of justification and entire sanctification, and such a readiness on the part of our Heavenly Father to bestow the second as well as the first, that young converts should be encouraged to go up at once to the Canaan of perfect love. ...

---

<sup>46</sup>For a demonstration of the growing emphasis on eradication among this group, see Leroy E. Lindsey Jr., “Radical Remedy: The Eradication of Sin and Related Terminology in Wesleyan-Holiness Thought, 1875–1925” (Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1996).

<sup>47</sup>The classic expression of this is Daniel Steele, *Mile-stone Papers* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1878), 134: “The great work of the Sanctifier by his powerful and usually instantaneous inworking, is to rectify the will, poise the appetites, and to enthrone the conscience over a realm in which no rebel lurks.” Cf. Steele, *Love Enthroned* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875), 126–27.

growth in grace thereafter should be rapid, constant, and palpable to themselves and others.<sup>48</sup>

The doctrinal statements of the most prominent holiness denominations that emerged from the American Methodist debates (Free Methodist, Nazarene, and Wesleyan [with its Wesleyan Methodist and Pilgrim Holiness roots]) stand in clear continuity with this definition.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, each group was careful to insure that the distinctive holiness emphases were represented in the courses of study that they assigned for those preparing for ministry. At first they relied on works by the original Methodist proponents of the “holiness” reformulation of Christian Perfection, particularly Daniel Steele and John Allen Wood.<sup>50</sup> Eventually a series of works

---

<sup>48</sup>From *Guide to Holiness* 76 (1885): 27–28.

<sup>49</sup>Since the Wesleyan Methodist split predated the solidification of the classic holiness model, their initial doctrinal statement on entire sanctification (1844 *Discipline*) is quite generic. However, a revised article in the 1893 *Discipline* placed them solidly within the holiness camp. An even more detailed classic holiness article was adopted in 1968 during merger with the Pilgrim Holiness Church to form the Wesleyan Church. It was revised again in 1980, but the revisions were mainly stylistic. The Free Methodists added an article on entire sanctification framed in classic holiness terms to their initial *Discipline* in 1860. This article was not revised until 1974, and the major holiness emphases remain in the revision. Finally, the article on entire sanctification in the *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene went through a series of refinements (each of which heightened its fit with the classic holiness model) from 1898 to 1928, and has remained basically unchanged since.

<sup>50</sup>To appreciate Steele’s prominence one must compare the section on sanctification in Amos Binney & Daniel Steele, *Theological Compend: Improved Edition* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1875), 128–34 against Binney’s original edition (Cincinnati, OH: Hitchcock & Walton, 1840), 84–87. Steele’s revision drops all mention of maturing in grace and adds the “holiness” emphasis on the Holy Spirit removing inbred sin and bringing instantaneous purity. The holiness commitment of this revision explains its broad use on holiness courses of study [CN: 1903–36; FMC: 1874–1951; PH: 1919–24, 1946–50; WMC: 1892–1968]. Other Steele volumes used include *Love Enthroned* [WMC: 1892–1943], *Milestone Papers* [FMC: 1943–51], *Gospel of the Comforter* (Boston, MA: Christian Witness, 1897) [CN: 1923–36, 1960–72; WMC: 1963–68], and *Half Hours with St. Paul* (Boston, MA: Christian Witness, 1895) [WMC: 1963–68]. Wood’s *Perfect Love* was also a mainstay on the courses [CN: 1944–76; FMC: 1874–1951; PH: 1924–68; WMC: 1911–63], while *Purity and Maturity* found some use [CN: 1903–11]. Other prominent Methodist works on the courses include Foster, *Christian Purity* [CN: 1911–19; PH: 1950–68]; Asbury Lowery, *Possibilities of Grace* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884) [CN: 1911–60; FMC: 1923–51]; and Dougan Clark, *Theology of Holiness* (Boston, MA: McDonald & Gill, 1893) [WMC: 1911–43]. Finally, one should mention A.M. Hills, *Holiness and Power for the Church and Ministry* (Cincinnati, OH: Revivalist Office, 1897) [CN: 1911–68, PH: 1919–24], which is largely a collection of quotes from Methodist holiness authors.

defending the classic model were produced by their own writers to serve as standard texts on the doctrine of holiness through the 1960s.<sup>51</sup>

In a technical sense this series of “standard” texts ended with the 1960s because the various groups terminated the course of study as an alternative to formal education. In a more fundamental sense, as Keith Drury recognized, texts defending the classic holiness model of entire sanctification were simply ceasing to be received as standard in the groups. How are we to account for this weakening reception?

Some might point to the new questions being raised about whether certain elements of the classic model were true to Wesley, particularly Fletcher’s equation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with entire sanctification.<sup>52</sup> But this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation. After all, one could admit that Fletcher (and the holiness model dependent upon him) differed significantly from Wesley, only to conclude that the difference

---

<sup>51</sup>The most prominent works were Benjamin T. Roberts, *Holiness Teachings* (North Chili, NY: “The Earnest Christian” Publishing House, 1893); R.T. Williams, *Sanctification: The Experience and the Ethic* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928); William M. Smith, *Bible Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Westfield, IN: Union Bible Seminary, 1934), 123–39; Zachary Taylor Johnson, *What is Holiness* (Cincinnati, OH: God’s Bible College, 1936); Harry Edward Jessop, *Foundations of Doctrine in Scripture and Experience: A Student’s Handbook on Holiness* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Evangelistic Institute, 1938); J.B. Chapman, *Holiness: the Heart of Christian Experience*, 3rd ed. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1963 [1941 ori.]); D. Shelby Corlett, *The Meaning of Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1944); Stephen White, *Five Cardinal Elements in the Doctrine of Entire Sanctification* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1948); George Allen Turner, *The More Excellent Way* (Winona Lake, IN: Light & Life, 1952; expanded reprint as *The Vision Which Transforms* [Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964]); W.T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1953); Stephen White, *Eradication: Defined, Explained, Authenticated* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1954); J. Paul Taylor, *Holiness: the Finished Foundation* (Winona Lake, IN: Light & Life Press, 1963); Richard Taylor, *Life in the Spirit: Christian Holiness in Doctrine, Experience and Life* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1966); and Roy Stephen Nicholson, *True Holiness: The Wesleyan-Arminian Emphasis* (Oswosso, MI: Oswosso College, 1967).

<sup>52</sup>The early 1970s witnessed a vigorous debate over this topic among holiness scholars and a growing awareness that Wesley did not agree with Fletcher. For a brief bibliographical survey of this debate and an analysis of the interchange between Wesley and Fletcher, see Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 48–54, 184–85. The clearest evidence of Wesley’s rejection of Fletcher’s proposal has since been unearthed and discussed in M. Robert Fraser, “Strains in the Understandings of Christian Perfection in Early British Methodism” (Vanderbilt University Ph.D. thesis, 1988), 382–86, 490–92.



was an improvement upon Wesley.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, this judgment seems implicit from the beginning in the courses of study of our focal holiness churches, which balance limited assignments of Wesley (at most his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and some sermons<sup>54</sup>) with exposure to Fletcher's refocusing of entire sanctification upon the baptism of the Holy Spirit!<sup>55</sup>

This leads me to suggest that the uneasiness undermining confidence in the classic holiness model of entire sanctification was more general in nature. I believe that the weakening reception reflected a growing awareness of inadequacies in the moral psychology upon which the model had been framed. To make this case I will compare three central aspects of Wesley's moral psychology with that evident in the standard holiness treatments, highlighting the instabilities that repeatedly emerge in the holiness case.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>See this very argument in J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1994), 15.

<sup>54</sup>Free Methodists through the history of their course of study (1860–1951) listed Wesley's *Sermons* and *Plain Account*. The Wesleyan Methodists added to their course (begun in 1867) the *Plain Account* in 1883 and the *Sermons* in 1900, carrying both until the course ended in 1968. The Pilgrim Holiness had both listed on their course in 1916 (the first I have located), but dropped the *Sermons* by 1919 and the *Plain Account* by 1942. The Church of the Nazarene included the *Plain Account* sporadically through the history of its course (1903–76), while never listing the entire set of *Sermons*, choosing instead to assign select sermons focusing on holiness: from 1905–15 they assigned *Wesley's Sermons* (Boston, MA: Christian Witness, 1903) [which contains the sermons numbered in *Works* as 13, 14, 40, 43 & 83], from 1915–32 they assigned *Wesley's Sermons: Ten Select Sermons* (Kansas City, MO: Publishing House of the Church of the Nazarene, 1915) [which adds sermons 39, 49, 80, 82 & 91], and from 1960–68 assigned *The Heart of Wesley's Faith* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1961) which bound the *Plain Account* with his sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

<sup>55</sup>This might not be evident on casual consideration. Fletcher's *Works* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1849) are found only on the FM course from 1860–87; and his *Checks* on CN from 1948–60. However one must add to this the listings of Thomas Ralston's *Elements of Divinity* (Louisville, KY: E. Stevensen, 1847), whose chapter dealing with sanctification simply reprints a portion of Fletcher's last *Check* [CN: 1919–40; FMC: 1870–78, 1887–1951; PH: 1924–50; WMC: 1931–55].

<sup>56</sup>Bruce Eugene Moyer has recently argued for the continuing similarities between Wesley and the American holiness movement on the doctrine of Christian Perfection in "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Comparative Study of John Wesley and the Modern American Holiness Movement" (Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1992). The similarities he cites are quite general in nature and do not go to the level of moral psychology, where I am highlighting instead differences. Part of the reason for this is that Moyer relies heavily in his account of Wesley on secondary studies by holiness scholars (esp. Leo Cox). It is little wonder that he finds *this* Wesley matching holiness emphases.

### A. Instability over the Relationship of Divine and Human Agency in Sanctification

One central aspect of Wesley's affectional moral psychology was his emphasis on the responsive nature of the affections. We noted above the way that this allowed him to interrelate dynamically God's *gracious* prevenience and our *responsible* cooperation throughout the Christian journey. By contrast, the American Methodist switch to a Reidian moral psychology pushed them back toward the Western Christian tendency of posing God's agency and human agency as mutually exclusive in the process of salvation. Holiness writers did not escape this impact. It is evident already in Beverly Carradine's fiery charge that anyone who teaches a growth theory of sanctification "uncrowns Christ, robs him of his peculiar glory of sanctifying the Church ... and transforms what is recognized in the Bible as a divine work into a mere evolution or development."<sup>57</sup> The obvious assumption is that all divine work is instantaneous, while any gradual work must be merely natural (or human). Turning this assumption around, holiness writers developed sophisticated accounts of what part of sanctification is God's work (hence, instantaneously perfect) and what part remains our responsibility (hence, gradual and fallible).<sup>58</sup> But here the instability became apparent. To the degree that they emphasized God's work of unilaterally removing inbred sin, holiness advocates verged upon a monergistic soteriology that could encourage quietism.<sup>59</sup> To the degree that they tried to protect against quietism by emphasizing our responsibility, they verged upon the Pelagian suggestion of autonomous human abilities.<sup>60</sup> The difficulty of finding ways within their assumptions to emphasize the primacy of God's grace without undercutting human responsibility has continued to plague the movement.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup>Carradine, *Old Man*, 148.

<sup>58</sup>A good example is R.T. Williams, *Sanctification*, esp. 23, 43, 51.

<sup>59</sup>This irony is highlighted in Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1967), 77–78.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. the evaluation of A.M. Hills in Paul Merritt Bassett, "A Study in the Theology of the Early Holiness Movement," *Methodist History* 13.3 (1975): 61–84; and Otho Jennings' stress on the need to "will to be holy" in "Areas of Growth After Sanctification," in *Further Insights into Holiness*, edited by Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1963), 141–60, see 151–52.

<sup>61</sup>As a recent example, note the ironic defeat at the 1989 Nazarene General Conference of the motion that the article entitled "Free Agency" in their *Manual* be retitled "Free Grace"; recorded in the *Journal of the Twenty-Second General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene*, edited by B. Edgar Johnson (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1989), 40, 257.

## B. Instability over the Role of Emotions in Motivating Holiness

A second central aspect of Wesley's moral psychology is his valuing of the affections as holistic motivating inclinations. Despite its vigorous claims to be defending Wesley, the contrast with the classic holiness model is again stark. For example, it is hard to imagine a stronger expression of the alternative rational control commitment in moral psychology than A.M. Hills' charge that Christians must "enthron[e] the rational and the moral in our lives, over the incitements of appetite and passion, and thus escape the doom of being the passive victim of impulses to evil."<sup>62</sup> What Hills calls for is precisely what standard holiness treatments described as the result of entire sanctification: "the readjustment of our whole nature whereby the inferior appetites and propensities are subordinated and the superior intellectual and moral powers are restored to their supremacy."<sup>63</sup> The rationalist lean of the classic model becomes even more evident when one notes their frequent concern to ensure that the act of consecration leading to this restored balance is not based primarily on emotion! When William McDonald (a Methodist pioneer of the movement) would provide the exhortation following a rousing sermon on the need for sanctification, for example, he would purposefully avoid further emotional appeal, choosing instead in his "cool, deliberate way" to expound his favorite topics: "reason and faith—reason, the ground-work of all religious obligation and faith the most reasonable thing in the whole universe."<sup>64</sup> And then there is the repeated advice not to trust one's

---

<sup>62</sup>A.M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, 2 vols. (Pasadena, CA: C.J. Kinne, 1931), 1: 362. This strong rational control model remains evident in G.B. Williamson's preface to Lauriston J. DuBois, *Guidelines for Conduct* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1965), 4.

<sup>63</sup>John P. Newman, "The Law of Purity," in *Our Holy Faith* (a textbook prepared for Asbury College), edited by T.M. Anderson (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1965), 219–20. See also Chapman, *Holiness*, 19; Corlett, *Meaning of Holiness*, 33, 87–88; and W.T. Purkiser's chapters on sanctification in *Exploring Our Christian Faith*, edited by W.T. Purkiser (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1960), 350–89.

<sup>64</sup>See the report on his exhortation in *A Modern Pentecost: Embracing a Record of the Sixteenth National Camp-Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness, held at Landisville, PA., July 23d to August 1st, 1873*, edited by Adam Wallace (Reprint ed., Salem, OH: Schmul, 1970), 128–30. Note also the comments on evangelism by Joseph H. Smith (chief expositor for the National Holiness Association in the early twentieth century) in Delbert Rose, *A Theology of Christian Experience: Interpreting the Historic Wesleyan Message* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1965), 121.

feelings in determining whether one has obtained entire sanctification. As John Church put it: “your feeling will fluctuate but thank God that does not have to be true of your spiritual state. ... The fact that you are in Jesus Christ is a fact that was established by a deliberate choice of your will, and that fact can only be changed in one way, and that is by a choice of your will.”<sup>65</sup> While it may not fit the “holy roller” stereotype, a distrust of the emotional/affectual dimension of human life is strung through all of these dimensions. Unlike Wesley’s more holistic commitments, reason is cast over against “blind” emotion, and affectivity is equated with passive domination by controlling impulses. The result has been an ongoing instability in the holiness movement concerning the legitimate role of emotion in Christian life, with the ever present danger of settling for either an “enthusiastic” emotionalism or a “passionless” moralism.<sup>66</sup>

### **C. Instability over the Relationship of Purity and Maturity in Christian Perfection**

The third central aspect of Wesley’s moral psychology that provides instructive comparison is his stress on the freedom that comes as affections are shaped into enduring tempers. By contrast, we noted that the pioneers of the classic holiness model argued that the baptism of the Spirit provides *spontaneous* rational control. The later tradition has frequently echoed this claim, but it has also found it to be another unstable position to hold. Consider a representative quote from Richard Taylor in the mid-1960s:

The Spirit-filled believer loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength and his neighbor as himself. This is the glad inner quality and spontaneous outflow of his life. He has been purged (even in the subconscious) from bitterness, rebelliousness toward God, hatred, envy, covetousness, and worldly-mindedness. He is now conscientious, spiritually-minded, Christ-centered, and is reaching for more and more of God. But his personality may not yet be a good vehicle of the love within.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup>John R. Church, *Earthen Vessels* (Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1942), 46–47. Church was a holiness evangelist within the MECS.

<sup>66</sup>Read in this light Victor Paul Reasoner’s *The Hole in the Holiness Movement* (Evansville, IN: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 1991); and “The American Holiness Movement’s Paradigm Shift Concerning Pentecost,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31.2 (1996): 132–46.

<sup>67</sup>R.S. Taylor, *Life in the Spirit*, 153.

Notice the qualifying “but” that begins the last sentence. Apparently the outflow of love is not always as spontaneous as the emphasis on the impact of the baptism of the Spirit initially suggests. But how could this be, if the person now enjoys Christian Perfection? The standard answer to this question that emerged in holiness circles was to contrast “purity” and “maturity” in the Christian life. Christian Perfection became a state of simple purity entered instantaneously when all evil inclinations are destroyed, allowing nascent holy inclinations to emerge. Maturity was identified with the subsequent entrenching of these holy inclinations.<sup>68</sup>

This distinction raises as many issues as it was meant to solve. To begin with, it correlated Christian Perfection with the *beginning* of developing Christian character, while Wesley had clearly related the term (in its more natural sense) to those of mature character who manifest the full disposition of Christ.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, the distinction could be used mainly to defend the newly sanctified as already perfect, rather than for stressing the importance of subsequent maturation.<sup>70</sup> This was particularly the case if one enlarged Wesley’s list of what perfection in love did *not* include to explain how someone was “perfect” who had remaining prejudices, temperament problems, etc.<sup>71</sup> Thirdly, the distinction constitutes another

---

<sup>68</sup>This model was first framed in Wood, *Purity and Maturity*, 26–32. A more nuanced distinction can be found in Steele, *Love Enthroned*, 126–27 (but see also 44). Wood’s formulation became the standard endlessly repeated in the later movement.

<sup>69</sup>Note this admission within the valiant attempt of Leo Cox to demonstrate Wesleyan precedent for holiness theology, in *John Wesley’s Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1964), 89.

<sup>70</sup>The history of this distinction in the Nazarene *Manual* is an interesting case in point. Its introduction into the article on Entire Sanctification in 1911 (significantly, in terms of a contrast between a perfect heart and perfect character) appears primarily motivated as a defense of the claim for Christian “perfection.” This concern carries over as it is moved to a footnote on the article in 1923. It is moved again and expanded in 1928 into a distinct Special Rule on Growth in Grace. Now members are exhorted to give careful attention to developing maturity, but the only stated rationale is that lack of doing so is undercutting the church’s holiness testimony! Finally, in 1976 the distinction is moved back into the statement on Entire Sanctification (now as a distinction between a pure heart and mature character) and this time the warning about impaired witness is finally subordinated to a stress that failure to nurture maturity frustrates and eventually forfeits the gracious transformation that holiness is meant to provide.

<sup>71</sup>For some examples of such debatable enlargement, see Church, *Earthen Vessels*, 50; Lewis T. Corlett, “Holiness and Nervous Reactions,” in *Further Insights into Holiness*, 333–49; and J. Kenneth Grider, “Carnality and Humanity: Exploratory Observations,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 11 (1976): 81–91.

instance of counterpoising divine and human action: proponents typically discounted all human efforts to reshape evil inclinations into holy ones prior to the unilateral eradicating work of the Holy Spirit; but they could be quite rigorous about the need for human discipline in shaping holy habits after entire sanctification.<sup>72</sup> Finally, the distinction effectively conceded a revision of the original model from “spontaneous” to “habituated” rational control. The only difference from the earlier Methodist alternative of habituated rational control was that a second discrete act of divine transformation was prescribed as necessary before habituation could begin.

Of course, whatever issues the distinction between purity and maturity raised within the classic holiness model, there was a greater challenge for those who overlooked or denied it.<sup>73</sup> They were forced to explain how the newly sanctified *did* consistently express Christian Perfection. Most fell back upon Phoebe Palmer’s decisionistic suggestion about the moment-by-moment nature of sanctification and the need to “keep the blessing.”<sup>74</sup>

#### **D. Impact upon the Role of the Means of Grace in the Sanctified Life**

With such instabilities in mind, we are at the point to consider how the holiness moral psychology affected their conception of the contribution of the means of grace to the sanctified life. As we saw earlier, the means of grace were central to Wesley’s model of holiness of heart and life. He relied upon them both as the ordinary avenues through which God conveys gracious transforming *power* and as trustworthy exercises by which we responsibly *form* holy tempers. Neither role carried through into the holiness movement smoothly.

---

<sup>72</sup>The best example is again Richard Taylor, this time his book *The Disciplined Life* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1962), esp. 22, 26–27, 50–55. See also T.W. Anderson, *After Sanctification: Growth in the Life of Holiness* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1929); Lyman F. Lance, *Soul Habits* (Colfax, NC: Lyman F. Lance, 1942); and Mary Alice Tenney, *Blueprint for a Christian World: An Analysis of the Wesleyan Way* (Winona Lake, IN: Light & Life Press, 1953).

<sup>73</sup>Ironically, John Allen Wood increasingly played down the distinction in the midst of battles over instantaneous sanctification. In particular, in the revised edition of *Perfect Love* (1894) he argued that the eradication of the principle of sin from the human heart “completes” the Christian character (34), and identified the newly sanctified as not just spiritual babes but adults (228). The first addition of *Perfect Love* (1861) had been much less antagonistic to growth in grace (see 19, 29).

<sup>74</sup>For a convenient collection of the typical advice on how to keep the blessing, see Hills, *Holiness and Power*, 344–65. Also typical is Theodore Ludwig, *The Life of Victory: or Saved, Sanctified and Kept* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1929), esp. 68–87.

Consider first the means of grace as mediators of gracious transforming power. The crucial issue here is not whether any means can convey power, but what type of means can do so (and do so most effectively). Wesley's holistic convictions led him to value both means of grace that primarily address the intellect and means that are focused more on our emotional/affective nature. He purposefully developed a balanced network of these for his followers. To the degree that the initial campmeetings and prayer groups functioned as alternative "intense" communities over against the emerging routinization of Methodist church life, this balance may have existed in practice in the early holiness movement.<sup>75</sup> But these gatherings soon took on a routine of their own that embodied the rationalist assumptions reflected in Luther Lee's justification of Christian worship and communal life: "Christianity requires us to maintain rational and pure Christian fellowship ... mutual watch care, instruction and support ... regular and orderly assemblies for public worship ... [and] healthy moral discipline."<sup>76</sup> These assumptions also worked more broadly, such that the typical means of grace recommended in holiness works came to align solidly on the intellectual side of the spectrum. About the only means recommended for obtaining entire sanctification was attendance at meetings where one would be challenged to make the appropriate consecration, and the most common means recommended for nurturing growth after entire sanctification were Bible reading, prayer, holiness literature, testifying to your experience, and aggressively maintaining your rational commitment to grow.<sup>77</sup> The fracture of Pentecostalism off of the

---

<sup>75</sup>Cf. A. Gregory Schneider, "A Conflict of Associations: The National Camp-Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness versus the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Church History* 66 (1997): 268–83.

<sup>76</sup>Luther Lee, *Elements of Theology* (Syracuse, NY: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing House, 1865 [1856 ori.]), 486–87. While Lee predates the classic model he was influential on the course of study [FMC: 1866–70, 1891–99; WMC: 1867–1911, 1923–31].

<sup>77</sup>Hills, *Holiness and Power*, 344–65; Edgar P. Ellyson, *Theological Compend* (Chicago, IL: Christian Witness, 1908), 125; C.W. Ruth, *Temptations Peculiar to the Sanctified* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928), 41–44; Rose, *Theology of Christian Experience*, 234; William S. Deal, *The Victorious Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1954); Allan Coppedge, "Holiness and Discipleship," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15.2 (1980): 80–97; and the recently reprinted example from ca. 1915 by Warren McIntire, "The Place of the Will in Christian Experience," *Holiness Digest* 11.1 (Winter 1997): 22.

early holiness shoot was an almost inevitable reaction to this trend, and left both groups searching for a more holistic balance.<sup>78</sup>

The role of means of grace as exercises to strengthen and shape Christian character was also rendered problematic by the fluctuating assumptions of the holiness movement. To the degree that the spontaneous rational control model held, there was little perceived need for this role. The emphasis was on how a changed heart naturally works its way out into life, rather than on how “external” exercises help change the heart.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, those opting for the decisionistic model of moment-by-moment renewed consecration placed little stress on formative disciplines. Even those most emphatic on the need for habituation after entire sanctification typically put more stress on our duty to form holy habits than on how formative means of grace might help this process.<sup>80</sup> More significantly, they tended to recast the very use of such means into an issue primarily of “duty.”<sup>81</sup>

Consider the example of Wesley’s “General Rules” for his Methodist societies, which he encapsulated in a three-fold injunction: do no harm, do as much good as you can, and attend all the ordinances of God. Stated so baldly these can look like a moralistic list of qualifications for membership. However Wesley’s primary intention in prescribing them was formative. They were designed for those who may not even have an assurance of justification yet, just a “desire of salvation.” They sketched out the disciplines that Wesley believed would bring assurance and transform their lives, if routinely followed.<sup>82</sup> Even works of mercy to others were enjoined not simply because this was “right,” but because engaging in

---

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Charles Edwin Jones, “Tongues-Speaking and the Wesleyan-Holiness Quest for Assurance of Sanctification,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22.2 (1987): 117–24; and Henry H. Knight III, “From Aldersgate to Azusa: Wesley and the Renewal of Pentecostal Spirituality,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 8 (1996): 82–98.

<sup>79</sup>Cf. Wood, *Purity and Maturity*, 135; Steele, *Love Enthroned*, 44; and R.T. Williams, *Sanctification*, 64–65.

<sup>80</sup>Cf. Anderson, *After Sanctification*, 16; and Lance, *Soul Habits*.

<sup>81</sup>For just a couple of the clearest expressions of this, see Lee, *Elements of Theology*, 344–63; and J.B. Chapman, *Holiness*, 48.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Helmut Nausner, “The Meaning of Wesley’s General Rules: An Interpretation,” *Asbury Theological Journal* 44.2 (1989): 43–60; and David Lowes Watson, “Aldersgate Street and the General Rules: The Form and the Power of Methodist Discipleship,” in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, edited by R.L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 1990), 33–47.



such acts serves reciprocally to nurture the actor's Christian character (holy tempers).<sup>83</sup>

Each of the holiness groups coming out of Methodism brought over the General Rules into their *Disciplines*, but it soon became clear that these rules functioned very differently in their context. This difference can be sensed in the way the General Rules were revised in the first *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene. To begin with, the target audience for the rules was changed from those "desiring salvation" to those who are seeking to be "saved from all sin" (i.e., entirely sanctified). Then the opening to the first section was altered by dropping the first three words (do no harm) and beginning with Wesley's next clause "avoid evil of every kind." While a slight change, it shifts the tone from a concern not to harm one's self or others to a concern to stay separate from anything that might contaminate you or call your "witness" into question. The second set of injunctions (do as much good as you can) was recast under the framework of "do that which is enjoined in the Word of God." While there were still some specifics cited that involved helping others, the emphasis shifted to the importance of obedience. This is particularly significant because Wesley's third instruction about attending the means of grace was subsumed into this section, and thereby rendered primarily a matter of obedience. Meanwhile a new third section was added which warned that those who want to remain members must not inveigh against the doctrines or usages of the church!<sup>84</sup>

What is suggested in these revisions can be demonstrated in a variety of historical developments within the holiness movement.<sup>85</sup> Disciplinary guidelines largely ceased to be appreciated as formative exercises, becoming instead boundary markers for defining proper holiness lifestyles, or marks of distinction to "testify to the world," or even simple tests of the submission of members to God's authority (as embodied in

---

<sup>83</sup>Cf. Sermon 92, "On Zeal," §II.5, *Works* 3:313.

<sup>84</sup>The revised rules are listed on 28–30 of the first *Manual* (1898). They carry down with only minor additions until 1976, when the first and second sections swap places and the language of third section is modified slightly.

<sup>85</sup>See especially the perceptive study of Paul Merritt Bassett, "Culture and Concupiscence: the Changing Definition of Sanctity in the Wesleyan Holiness Movement, 1867–1920," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 59–127.

the church).<sup>86</sup> A major reason for this change was the holiness assumption that human efforts at reform are fruitless prior to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and obedience largely spontaneous after the baptism. On these terms observation of disciplinary rules (including the rule of attending the various means of grace!) is mainly a way of demonstrating externally that this internal change has already taken place.<sup>87</sup> And since it is not assumed to do anything for you, the natural tendency is to begin to question the rationale for particular items on the list, as well as how often we *have* to do them. This goes a long way to explaining the difference in Wesley's practice of regular Eucharist and that of the typical holiness church!

## VI. RECONNECTING THE MEANS TO THE END

In light of all that we have seen, let me return to the opening question of this paper: What accounts for the present malaise in the holiness movement about the importance and possibility of Christian Perfection, and how can this be overcome? I have tried to show that Wesley's answer would be that the movement is reaping the results of continuing to demand that their members attain this spiritual goal while failing to provide for them the full range of the graciously-provided means for nurturing true holiness of heart and life. Their predictable failure to reach such holiness, apart from these means, has naturally led them to question the goal itself. Wesley would then press to the level of the changed conception of Christian Perfection that rendered most of these means either superfluous or mere duties. Ultimately, he would challenge the adequacy of the rationalist and decisionistic emphases of the modern Reidian moral psychology, which the holiness movement has broadly adopted.

---

<sup>86</sup>Thus, in 1951 when the Free Methodists reaffirmed the General Rules their justification was that rules are essential for witness individually and corporately, and help give clear-cut boundaries for guidance; see the Report of the Committee on Principle and Precedent in the (manuscript) *Journal of Record of General Conference, 1923–55*, 825 (at archive center in Indianapolis). For comments on similar rationale among Nazarenes, see H. Ray Dunning, "Nazarene Ethics as Seen in a Theological, Historical and Sociological Context" (Vanderbilt University Ph.D. thesis, 1969), 53, 76–78.

<sup>87</sup>Note the use of precisely this language in DuBois' attempt to explain and defend the place for observing the (Nazarene) General Rules in *Guidelines for Conduct*, 29–30, 37.

This means that those of us who find Wesley's model of the Christian journey to holiness more convincing than the models with which we were raised must do more than simply issue calls for recovering Wesley's richer network of means for nurturing Christian holiness. We must find ways to rekindle an appreciation for the responsive and formative nature of human moral/spiritual choice and action; in other words, we must recover something more like Wesley's affectional moral psychology. Explicit debates about moral psychology were central to the earlier revisions of Wesley's model, and will be central to its recovery.

Some awareness of this is evident in the holiness movement's engagement with the modern discipline of psychology. Psychology emerged as an independent "scientific" discipline, freeing itself from its earlier subsumption within philosophy, by focusing particular attention on the nonrational dimensions of the human psyche. One predictable response to this by holiness writers, with their rational control emphasis, has been to view psychology as either a dangerous attempt to explain away sin and moral accountability or an alternative form of healing that should be roundly denounced as ineffective.<sup>88</sup> A few writers have chosen instead to emphasize those psychologists who define psychological health as an integration of the personality where emotional attitudes are harmonized and directed to one end, invoking them in support of the conception of entire sanctification as restored rational control.<sup>89</sup> But continuing dialogue with modern psychology and its emphasis on nonrational dimensions of human motivation has encouraged moves to qualify the spontaneous rational control emphasis of the classic model of Christian Perfection. The most common (and conservative) way of doing this has been to invoke the purity/maturity distinction to separate repressed complexes and other psychological issues that require long-term counseling to deal with from the "carnal nature" that is instantaneously cleansed in

---

<sup>88</sup>E.g., John Marvin Hames, *Orthodox Psychology* (Chicago, IL: Christian Witness, 1929), 3, 32–33, 43–44, 72; J.P. Taylor, *Holiness*, 97; and the remark quoted approvingly in J. Harold Greenlee, *What the New Testament Says About Holiness* (Salem, OH: Schmul, 1994), 50.

<sup>89</sup>See esp. S.S. White, *Eradication*, 93–94; and William A. Arnett, "Current Theological Emphases in the American Holiness Tradition," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 35 (1961): 120–29; here, 128–29.

entire sanctification.<sup>90</sup> Only a few brave souls have suggested connecting entire sanctification itself integrally with the process of maturation, and these have retained a fairly rationalist model of maturation.<sup>91</sup>

The other place that psychological reconsideration has entered recent holiness debates over sanctification is the use of “relational” psychologies like those of Martin Buber and Gordon Allport to counter the possible suggestion that inbred sin is some type of material “substance” that must be removed to free up spontaneous holiness. In relational terms the essential nature of human fallenness is identified as broken relationships resulting from our egocentricity or self-sovereignty, and the essence of salvation becomes restored relationships through true submission. While this is certainly preferable to a materialist alternative, these relationalist accounts have typically carried over the decisionistic emphases of their existentialist roots.<sup>92</sup> Even Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, who has developed the account with the most stress on the need for *growth* in holistic relational holiness, gives little attention to the actual dynamics of forming Christian character (holy tempers), choosing to emphasize instead that holiness is a moment-by-moment impartation of our growing relationship with God!<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup>E.g., W. Curry Mavis, “Repressed Complexes and Christian Maturity,” in *The Word and the Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Wesleyan-Arminian Theology*, edited by Kenneth Geiger (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1965), 307–15; Leon & Mildred Chambers, *Holiness and Human Nature* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1975; ori. *Human Nature and Perfecting Holiness*, 1972), 24–27, 48–52; David Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1981), 13–15; Dick Howard, *So Who’s Perfect? A Candid Look at our Humanness* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1985), 45, 97, 103; and W.T. Purkiser, *These Earthen Vessels: The Christian: His Failures, Foibles, and Infirmities* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1985), 55.

<sup>91</sup>The best example is Leslie Ray Marston, *From Chaos to Character: A Study in the Stewardship of Personality* (Winona Lake, IN: Light & Life Press, 1948 [ori., 1935]) [FMC: 1947–51; PH: 1946–66].

<sup>92</sup>Cf. William M. Greathouse, “A Study of Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin and Perfection as Treated by Cell, Lee, and Cannon” (Vanderbilt University M.A. thesis, 1948), 70–83; Rob L. Staples, “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Reinterpretation” (Pacific School of Religion Ph.D. thesis, 1963), esp. viii, 94–98, 121–33; H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1988), 297, 472–75, 483; and John A. Knight, *All Loves Excelling: Proclaiming Our Wesleyan Message* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1995), 19, 25–26, 77.

<sup>93</sup>See Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill, 1972), esp. 88, 206, 232.

So, we have some distance to go in recovering Wesley’s affectional moral psychology. It will not be a simple process, because we must swim against the current of our culture—both in the church and at large. More importantly, it will not be sufficient simply to reach agreement among ourselves as theologians, the vital practical-theological task will be finding effective ways of getting the basic assumptions of an affectional moral psychology renewed “in the bones” of the sisters and brothers in our communities. It is a daunting challenge, but one well worth accepting. I invite you to join me in the attempt.

## APPENDIX A

### ALTERNATIVE MORAL PSYCHOLOGIES

	Determinist	Self-determinist
rational primacy	intellectualist (Socrates?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous rational control (Socrates?)</li> <li>habituated rational control (Plato)</li> <li>decisionistic rational control (Kant)</li> </ul>
volitional holism	voluntarist (Hobbes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous sentiments (Hutcheson)</li> <li>habituated virtues (Aristotle)</li> <li>decisionistic self-assertion (Sartre)</li> </ul>
passional primacy	naturalist (Hume)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous expressivism (Rousseau)</li> <li>habituated expressivism (prudent hedonist)</li> <li>decisionistic expressivism (Nietzsche?)</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B

### ALTERNATIVE CHRISTIAN MORAL PSYCHOLOGIES

	Determinist	Self-determinist
rational primacy	intellectualist (Gnostics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous rational control (Scholastics?)</li> <li>habituated rational control (Clement, etc.)</li> <li>decisionistic rational control (Personalism)</li> </ul>
volitional holism	voluntarist (Augustine, Luther, Edwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous sentiments (Pietists, Schl.)</li> <li>habituated virtues (Aquinas, Gregory)</li> <li>decisionistic self-assertion (Scotus, Kierk.)</li> </ul>
passional primacy	naturalist (?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spontaneous expressivism (libertines)</li> <li>habituated expressivism (?)</li> <li>decisionistic expressivism (?)</li> </ul>